



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

**Testimony of Valerie Ervin
Montgomery County Councilmember**

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

**In Support of Senate Bill 281
Fire Arm Safety Act of 2013**

**Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee
February 6, 2013**

Chairman Frosh, Vice Chair Gladden, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, for the record, I am Councilmember Valerie Ervin, and I am here today to support Governor O'Malley's Fire Arm Safety Act of 2013.

On the federal level President Obama and Vice President Biden are taking the lead in crafting common-sense gun control measures, and I believe Senate Bill 281 does the same thing right here in Maryland. Governor O'Malley's comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence isn't just focused on gun licensing and safety, but also includes critical elements to enhance school security, and provides improvements in mental health services.

I believe that Senate Bill 281 strikes the right balance by placing the strictest controls on the weapons and ammunition clips that can cause the greatest loss of life. The ban on the possession and sale of high-capacity, military weapons and limiting the capacity of magazines to 10 rounds instead of 20 are critical steps in this area.

Requiring a license for handgun purchases, mandatory safety training, fingerprinting requirements, and registering weapons from other states, will provide a comprehensive way to improve tracking and promote safety in a manner that does not infringe on individual rights under the Second Amendment.

On January 22, the Montgomery County Council passed a resolution supporting state and federal legislation regulating the sale of guns and ammunition because protecting public safety is one of the foremost duties of every public official and gun violence poses a continuous threat to the safety of our residents. In this same resolution, which is attached to my testimony, the Council encouraged the General Assembly to pass many of the items provided for in Senate Bill 281.

(Over)

In addition, as Chair of the Council's Education Committee, I am delighted to see that the Governor's FY14 budget dedicated \$25 million to school security enhancements, including support for cameras at school entrances, automatically locking doors, shatterproof glass, and buzzer entrance systems.

Just yesterday the Council acted to forward fund 26 remaining elementary schools that did not have access control systems. Representatives from the Montgomery County Public School System reported that they will be looking to expand this system to all middle schools in the coming years. This expansion will take resources, and I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to comment on the need for these enhancements in Montgomery County.

Gun violence is responsible for approximately 30,000 deaths each year, nation-wide. About one-third of these deaths are homicides. While stricter gun control is needed, I am clear that there is no single legislative act that will prevent every act of violence in our community involving a handgun.

However as I close, I would like to remind all of us about the story of a girl who was walking along a beach where thousands of starfish had become beached on the shore. The girl began to toss each starfish back into the ocean as she walked.

At one point a man approached her, and said she would never be able to save all the starfish, and you can't begin to make a difference.

The girl went on and threw another starfish into the ocean as she replied, "It made a difference for that one."

So for me, if tightening our gun control laws means that even one child is saved from a shooting rampage in school or on a college campus; if even one coworker is spared from a spree killing in the workplace; or even one loved one doesn't come under fire while out for the evening with their family in a public space, we will have done the right thing. We will have made a difference.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I encourage you to give Senate Bill 281 a favorable report and ask that you support funding in the FY14 budget to help enhance security in our schools.